

THE STATUS OF MEN IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

**THIRD BIENNIAL REPORT
OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF MEN**

<http://www.nh.gov/csm/>

MARCH 2010

Mission Statement

The mission of the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men (CSM):

- To examine issues and effects of cultural biases and stereotyping, beginning with childhood experiences and progress in public schools, and extending to adult concerns such as family relations.
- To promote education and policies which bring fathers and children closer together, with an emphasis on the importance of the role of the father in child development.
- To examine physical and mental health problems unique to, or predominantly affecting men, including a study of male suicide, and make appropriate recommendations.
- To promote initiatives, programs and incentives that will enable men to continue their education and develop family and career skills to improve their ability to be productive and responsible citizens.

The CSM was established by the New Hampshire legislature in 2002, as described in [RSA 19-I](#).

Membership consists of seven members nominated and approved by the Governor and Executive Council:

- Joe H. Mastromarino, MD, Chair
- David Lauren, Esq, Treasurer
- Larry Colby, Secretary
- Michael J. Geanoulis, Sr.
- Scott R. Meyer, PhD
- Robert Cameron Sinclair

One seat remains vacant since the resignation of Scott Garman in March, 2009.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The **NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN** wishes to recognize the cooperation and expertise of the many specialists and agencies who contributed to the substance of this report. With their cooperation and assistance, this commission is able to bring higher visibility and effectiveness for our mission to make things better for men and their families.

President Barack Obama – For his White House Forums on Responsible Fatherhood
Arne Duncan, Secretary, US Dept of Education
Michael K. Brown, Senior Assistant to the NH Attorney General
Grace Mattern, Director, NH Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
Jeff Drake, Monadnock Family Resource Center
All Pro Dad, Family First and the National Football League
John-Michael Dumais, Director, NH Parent Information and Resource Center
Elaine Holden, PhD, early education specialist, Rivier College
Nancy Notis, Marketing and Public Relations, Portsmouth Regional Hospital
The National Fatherhood Initiative
The National Center for Fathering
Attorney Jed Abraham
The Administration for Children and Families
NH Department of Information Technology – For graciously hosting our web site
Lisa Paone, HUB Family Resource Center, Dover NH

We are especially appreciative of former commissioner Scott Garman, who resigned last fall to move out of state, yet continues supporting us with his technical expertise as needed.

This commission is also grateful to the members of the public who took valuable time away from their personal obligations in order to bring us a better sense of the issues and problems described herein.

We are grateful to our spouses, loved ones, families, and friends for their tolerance, support, suggestions, and advocacy during this period.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	5
CULTURAL BIASES AND STEREOTYPING	5
White House Attention for Men and Boys Requested	
RSA 633:4 and the Attorney General; Legal Aid	
Child Support Compliance Problems	
Are Domestic Violence Portrayals Impartial?	
Pedophiles Louts and a Child's Best Interest	
Suggestions for Guardian <i>ad litem</i> Education	
BRINGING FATHERS AND CHILDREN CLOSER TOGETHER	10
New England Fathering Conference	
NH Child Advocacy Network and the Children's Trust Fund	
Task Force on Work and Family	
Communication with the NH Department of Health and Human Services	
EDUCATION AND HEALTH	11
White House Forum on Responsible Fatherhood and Education Success	
NH Parent Information and Resource Center	
Men and Early Education; Watch DOGS; Wear Blue Day	
PROMOTING INITIATIVES PROGRAMS AND INCENTIVES	12
Exploring the Causes and Consequences of Father Absence	
The 100 Billion Dollar Man	
Administration for Children and Families	
Take Your Daughter and Son to Work Day	
Parenting Classes for Dads; All Pro Dad	
Legislation	
Steps in the Juvenile Court Process and the Child Welfare System	
More Resources for Fathers	
CONCLUSION SUMMARY AND GOALS	17
APPENDICES	19
Appendix A: White House Letter Re: Council for Men and Boys	
Appendix B: Correspondence with the Attorney General; RSA633:4	
Appendix C: Letter to the Department of Health and Human Services	
Appendix D: NH Custody Statistics	
Appendix E: Steps in the Child Welfare System	

OVERVIEW

One of the areas highlighted in the 2nd Biennial Report was the intent to “...clarify commission goals and objectives.” A great deal of care and energy over the last two years was devoted to those visions. Members offered and received facts and opinions on a wide range of topics related to our charge. At the same time, members worked to illuminate their own individual reactions to the topic at hand and to communicate their strongly held opinions in clear and respectful ways. It is one thing, for example, to review studies or receive testimony about the father-child connection, and quite another to do so in terms of personal experiences as a dad or a son. Commissioners worked hard to create an environment of trust where areas of member’s personal stories could be positively brought to bear on public topics related to being male in New Hampshire.

It might seem counterintuitive for those who believe that fathers generally do not care about a meaningful connection with their children, but one study found many young fathers took pride in becoming fathers, giving themselves a new sense of purpose (Source: Natasha Cabrera, Jacqueline Shannon, Cheri Vogel, Catherine Tamis-LeMonda, Rebecca Ryan, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Helen Raikes, Rachel Cohen, *Low-Income Fathers’ Involvement in their Toddler’s Lives: Biological Fathers Early Head Start and Evaluation*, 2009; see also Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, *Marginal Men: Fatherhood in the Lives of Low Income Unmarried Men*).

Complaints about family-related problems seemed to be an overriding concern. Even as men die sooner than women from the 15 leading causes of diseases and accidents, and are more likely to experience inferior school performance, issues about the difficulty of maintaining meaningful contact with their children far and away outweighed issues considered of lesser importance according to the public testimony we received over the last two years.

CULTURAL BIASES AND STEREOTYPING

White House Attention for Men and Boys Requested

The Commission became aware that the Obama administration created a White House Council on Women and Girls. Its mission will provide a coordinated federal response to the challenges confronted by women and girls. Given what we’ve discovered about the condition of men and boys, we were disappointed that the Obama administration was not aware that the condition of men and boys need improvement, as well. Accordingly, a letter was sent to the White House last summer praising the effort for women and girls, and asked for a similar Council for Men and Boys. See **Appendix A**.

RSA 633:4 and the Attorney General

The CSM, in response to concerns from parents being denied access to their children by their ex-partners, wrote to the Attorney General's office for clarification of RSA 633:4, a criminal code designed to protect a parent's right to his or her children. Some fathers complained that they were unable to get the police to enforce the code. A copy of the letter was sent to Police Chief Ted Smith of the NH Association of Police Chiefs, along with yet unanswered telephone requests for more information to help us better understand the problem. See **Appendix B: Attorney General Correspondence**.

Michael K. Brown, Senior Assistant to the Attorney General, acknowledged the CSM's letter concerning standardized and consistent enforcement of RSA 633:4, and stated that "where RSA 633:4 is not enforced his office would be interested to know the specifics of each case."

This is a positive development for fathers and mothers who might be encouraged by the prospects of improved protection of their court-ordered parenting time going forward. One commissioner, however, was not satisfied stating that the attorney general's office ought to be approached again asking for specific performance by all criminal justice departments to enforce the law as it is written.

Legal Aid

One dad, who could not afford a lawyer, described financial difficulty in keeping connected to his child by a "gatekeeper" mother who compromised lawful access to his child. The CSM is in the process of gathering a list of attorneys from the New Hampshire Bar Association for the purpose of obtaining pro bono representation that might help low income fathers maintain a better connection with their children. The CSM endeavors to educate and encourage all concerned about the ordinary benefits of a meaningful and caring father/child relationship.

Child Support Compliance Problems

A 2009 study and final report of the NH Child Support Guidelines can be accessed at the NH Department of Health and Human Services website (*NH Child Support Guidelines Review and Recommendations Report*, 2009. <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DCSS/guidelines.htm>)

A similar study was undertaken in 2004 by a 12-member commission enacted by HB310 (2004), and made 17 recommendations that appear to be largely ignored. The CSM regrets that the 2009 report had the effect of de-emphasizing the 2004 report complete with its 17 recommendations that were not properly pursued, and failed to estimate child costs as it was charged to do. (*Recommendations of the NH Commission to Study Child Support*, 2004,

<http://www.nh.gov/csm/resources.html>)

As reported earlier, the CSM believes this area of policy deserves closer attention. Child support amounts collected by child support services as a percent of amounts ordered has remained mired around 60-65 percent for all accounts throughout the history of the those services (see the detail provided in our first biennial report, page 17,

http://www.nh.gov/csm/downloads/nh_status_of_men_2005.pdf and the annual OCSE federal reports available at the Division of Child Support Services). Given that compliance rates can exceed 90% when fathers have meaningful relationships with their children (Braver, 1998), policy and law ought to be modified in a way that might encourage fathers and children to be closer together as prescribed by our charge under RSA 19-I.

One Seacoast resident, who submitted a grievance by proxy because he could not afford to miss work, graphically described his conflict between the need to provide economic support for a son he loves very much and the periodic homelessness he suffers. After deductions for child support his net weekly income was \$148.22. This case highlights the possibility that some ordinary wage earners are unable to provide for a separate household and suffer economically as well as their former partners and children.

One man came forward to describe problems revolving around the discovery that he was not the biological father of an alleged son for whom he was ordered to support. His efforts to end child support payments and to bring charges against his former wife and her former mate for fraud were unsuccessful. After consulting with US Citizens against Paternity Fraud and discovering the growing severity of the problem, the CSM voted to support legislation that would protect children and families from the harmful effects of paternity fraud. See also Ruth Padawer, *Who Knew I Was Not the Father*, NY Times, Nov 22, 2009.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/magazine/22Paternity-t.html?_r=3&pagewanted=all

In a new kind of double jeopardy, a father who lost his job complained about an order to continue paying child support from a retirement account funded from income that had already been taxed for child support.

Are Domestic Violence Portrayals Impartial?

One member of the public, concerned about men being unfairly portrayed as the primary cause of domestic violence, submitted a compilation of studies entitled, *"References Examining Assaults by Women on Their Spouses or Male Partners: An Annotated Bibliography"* by Dr. Martin Fiebert. Fiebert's summary can be seen at: <http://www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm>

Grace Mattern, director of the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (NHCADSV) submitted the report, *"Violence Against Men in New Hampshire,"* and told us that

men and boys suffer from domestic and sexual assault as well. One commissioner expressed regret that it was not obvious from the report that the safety record for children was better with involved and caring natural mothers and fathers, and that the sexual and physical abuse rates for children are higher where the biological father is not involved. The report can be seen at: <http://www.nhcadv.org/Maureen/VAM%20Report%20Final.pdf>.

There was further concern over the controversy revolving around the fact that www.SAFE-NH.org, an organization that treats domestic violence problems on a sex-neutral basis, is not a member of the NH DV Coalition. The CSM remains committed to the ideal that all New Hampshire citizens deserve protection from harm and abuse whether caused by and/or victimized by a man or a woman.

A *US News and World Report* article, "*Spanking Raises Chances of Risky, Deviant Sexual Behavior*" by Amanda Gardner, 2/28/08, summarizes research from UNH professor Dr. Murray Straus and the UNH Family Research Laboratory. This research found that in addition to other damaging effects of childhood spanking, risky sexual behaviors and masochism-related sexual deviances are also likely consequences of corporal punishment. <http://health.usnews.com/usnews/health/healthday/080228/spanking-raises-chances-of-risky-deviant-sexual-behavior.htm>

Pedophiles, Louts and a Child's Best Interests

The stereotyping of men is an ongoing concern of the CSM. The status of men hit a new low at British Airways because of a policy that prohibits men from being seated next to children traveling alone. One man brought suit against the airline for being humiliated as a possible pedophile. No such policy exists for women.

Another sad example of fathers being portrayed as undesirable comes from an Associated Press article titled "*Father's Day: In Cards, Dad is A Lout*" which appeared in the Keene (NH) Sentinel on 5/23/08. Greeting cards, in addition to media outlets like television and movies, too often demean men and fathers as irrelevant dolts, and may even influence public policy.

Some fathers requested help to redress court decisions improperly founded because of bias, perjury, judicial error, and possible stereotyping. Some courts, lawyers, and guardian *ad litem*s apparently show callous regard for men's lawful rights and the father child connection, according to testimony we received. Three bills of address were introduced in the legislature in attempts to repair such grievances. House Address Bills **HA 1**, **HA 2** and **HA 3** call for the removal of Marital Master Michael Garner, Judge Lucinda Sadler, and Marital Master Philip Cross, respectively.

Suggestions for Guardian *ad litem* Education

A New Hampshire father of four and Senior Mechanical Engineer at the Vermont Nuclear Plant approached us for help to facilitate improvements in the training and education of Guardian *ad litem*s (GAL). He brought evidence suggesting that guardian *ad litem*s need to be more cautious about false allegations being used in the "gamesmanship" of child custody actions, and that emotional harm accrues to children who are victims of Parental Alienation. He told us that the GAL in his case recommended supervised visitation in spite of the fact that the court found no credible evidence that abuse had occurred.

According to Thoennes, et. al, there is disagreement over how many accusations are false, although most estimates range between 20% and 80%. Thoennes and her colleagues report that in 33% of the cases in their survey, no abuse was believed to have occurred. Abuse was believed likely in 50%, and in 17% no determination could be reached. In over 500 cases of sexual abuse allegations where expert consultation was provided over 6 years, 40% have been in divorce and custody disputes. Of the divorce and custody cases that have been adjudicated, in three-fourths there was no legal finding of abuse. That is, charges were dropped, never filed, the person was acquitted in criminal court, or there was a finding of no abuse in family or juvenile court. (Thoennes & Pearson 1988a, 1988b; Thoennes & Tjaden, 1990). Dwyer (1986) found that most professionals agree that the proportion of false allegations is likely to be highest when the allegation surfaces in a conflict over custody and visitation.

Other men have expressed concern about possible GAL bias for a variety of reasons. Pursuant to the foregoing, and our belief that the courts must always act in a fashion consistent with child safety and wellness, the following list of suggestions is herewith submitted. Supporting references are too numerous to cite here, so the reader is simply encouraged to type keywords like false allegations of physical, sexual abuse or parental alienation, and gamesmanship of divorce in any search engine:

1. GALs should have greater awareness about parental alienation and its harm to children.
2. GALs should receive ongoing education in how to make the best possible assessments in order to determine the veracity of accusations in contentious child custody disputes.
3. GALs should recommend a continuing parent/child connection during abuse determinations by way of court approved supervised visitation.
4. Since some fathers have difficulty with a relaxed connection with their children at traditional visitation settings, GALs should consider recommending forms of parent/child reunification alternatives to supervised visitation centers.
5. Where appropriate, GALs should recommend therapeutic enhanced visitation consistent with Supervised Visitation Network standards and policies.

BRINGING FATHERS AND CHILDREN CLOSER TOGETHER

Take Your Daughter and Son to Work Day

The CSM encourages fathers to serve as role models for their children by taking them to work on occasion. The official day was originally conceived by the Ms. Foundation for Women as Take Your Daughter to Work Day but has evolved to encourage both parents to take sons and daughters to work. Now known as Take Your Daughter and Son to Work Day, the CSM encourages both men and women to participate. The designated day is the fourth Thursday in April. For this year (2010), the date is April 22.

New England Fathering Conference

The CSM also participated in the annual New England Fathering Conference. The conference provides a variety of workshops for policy makers and fathers in the areas of health, education, involvement and the legal system. Commissioner Colby has been active as co-sponsor and organizer for almost a dozen years. The theme for this year's 11th annual conference in Newport, RI was "*Stronger Fathers, Stronger Communities: Supporting Men's Commitment to Their Children.*" New Hampshire is tentatively scheduled to host the Conference in 2012 and 2013—details to be announced.

NH Child Advocacy Network (NH CAN) and the Children's Trust Fund

The CSM was recently accepted as member and advisor with NH CAN and the New Hampshire Children's Trust Fund. Advisor status allows the commission to influence future topics of concern related to our mission.

Task Force on Work and Family (TFWF)

Commissioner Geanoulis, who represents the CSM on the TFWF, reports a growing awareness on the economic benefits for families where the father is involved. This commission appreciates TFWF efforts to improve flexibility, opportunities, child care and health benefits for both mothers and fathers in the workplace. Increasing opportunities for mothers in the workplace provides for improved economic conditions around the home and greater opportunities for fathers to be closer to their children. A TFWF report is due in November of this year (2010).

Communication with the NH Department of Health and Human Services

The CSM has requested help by way of a letter to the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (H&HS) to facilitate our efforts to (1) get a better handle on state data related to

father absence, (2) estimate the costs of fatherlessness to the New Hampshire taxpayer, and (3) enhance the father/child connection by way of outreach, education and a permanent liaison to the CSM. See **Appendix C**.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

White House Community Forum on Responsible Fatherhood and Education Success

A White House Forum, held by President Obama's staffers in Manchester last September, was the second in a series to be held throughout the country for the purpose of encouraging higher levels of father involvement in the education of their children. Arne Duncan, Secretary of the US Department of Education, emphasized the importance of men's involvement in their children's education. The commission strongly supports this federal outreach.

One commissioner expressed regret that the title for these valuable forums implied fathers as irresponsible and suggested that the term "Responsible Fatherhood" be changed to "Father Involvement" so that the title reads, instead: "White House Community Forum on Father Involvement and Education Success." Obama staffers were advised about this concern by email.

NH Parent Information and Resource Center (NHPIRC)

John-Michael Dumais, director of the New Hampshire Parent Information and Resource Center visited us to stress the importance of the involvement of both parents in their children's education. The testimony of Mr. Dumais served to reinforce the data submitted in our earlier reports about the higher likelihood for educational success when the father demonstrates an interest in his children's education. See also the Education and Early Learning sections of the *Father Facts* booklet (5th edition) available from the Fatherhood Initiative website: <http://www.fatherhood.org>. Mr. Dumais encouraged CSM participation and support for the PIRC conference (March 2009): *Family Engagement in Education*. Commissioners Colby, Mastromarino, Geanoulis, Sinclair and other panelists presented at the seminar on the topic: *Fatherhood and Education: The Missing Link*.

Men and Early Education

Elaine Holden, PhD, who specializes in early education at Rivier College, encouraged us to do whatever possible to help men get more involved in the education of children, especially boys. The United States is falling behind educationally in the world. Nearly half of this country's mathematicians need to be imported from other countries. Holden further alleged that students need male role models; that men need more encouragement to become teachers; and that more

men should be involved in special education. Holden expressed regret that she has never met a male reading specialist. The CSM encourages and supports more involvement by men as volunteers, paid staff and active parents in the education of children.

Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students)

At a recent White House Forum held in Manchester, NH last September, CSM members learned about a new initiative called Watch Dogs which is designed to encourage fathers and other father figures to get involved in their local schools. Conceived by the National Center for Fathering, and well received by school administrators, the program encourages fathers to form groups to go into their children's high schools and help facilitate the education of students by creating a presence that enhances safety and education. For more information see <http://www.fathers.com/> or call 888-540-DOGS (3647).

Wear Blue Day and Men's Health

The CSM noted a women's awareness campaign called Wear Red Day to raise awareness about heart disease risks among women and borrowed the idea for men's health awareness. Henceforth, September 1st will be designated as a Wear Blue Day to remind men about the need for an annual physical examination. By way of repetition from our earlier reports, men have higher death rates from the 15 leading causes of diseases and accidents.

The marketing department of the Portsmouth Regional Hospital was approached by the CSM for help in raising public awareness about male health problems. Thanks to CSM outreach, they have promised to develop a publicity program for men similar to those devised for women. See our previous reports about the poor status of men's health.

PROMOTING INITIATIVES PROGRAMS AND INCENTIVES

Exploring the Causes and Consequences of Father Absence

In efforts "to bring fathers and children closer together" pursuant to our charge under RSA 19-I, the CSM will continue to explore the causes and consequences of father absence over the next biennium. Father absence is considered by some to be society's number one social problem. Accordingly, the CSM will give this particular issue higher priority going forward. The public is encouraged to assist us in this discovery process. In America, 24.35 million children (33.5%) live absent their biological father. (Source: Krieder, Rose and Fields. *Living Arrangements of Children*, 2001. *Current Population Reports*, P70-104. Table 1. Washington, D.C.: US Census Bureau, 2005).

The 100 Billion Dollar Man

This Commission feels it has the potential to reduce the demand for a variety of expensive state funded services, even if only partially successful in its mandate to bring fathers and children closer together. According to a report by the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), the annual public cost of father absence is 100 billion dollars nationally. (See *The Annual Public Costs of Father Absence*, <http://www.fatherhood.org/doclibrary/fatherabsencecost.pdf>)

New Hampshire's fatherless rates and share of that cost have yet to be determined. The CSM hopes to develop more detailed information going forward.

Fatherlessness is a complex phenomenon caused by a variety of circumstances including questionable choices - by both males and females - related to fertility, marriage, and cohabitation. Some non-resident fathers are active with their children. Some fathers are not, due to a variety of perverse incentives like father-substitute government programs, Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS), and debilitating family court decisions that marginalize the father/child connection (See **Appendix D: NH Custody Statistics**). It is also true, we regret to say, that while some men travel long distances at considerable expense to see their children, others seem not to care and/or are not willing to marry. One man told us that his two sons prefer to have uncommitted relationships because of what they learned from their father's experience in family court. Another submitted his sentiments against marriage by way of an essay written by Attorney Jed Abraham entitled, "*No, high divorce rates and biased laws have made marriage a gamble for too many men.*" See: <http://www.fact.on.ca/news/news0005/in000529.htm>.

The CSM recognizes the ordinary importance of fathers as outlined in our previous reports, and dedicates itself to improving the chances for children to have a meaningful connection with both their natural fathers and mothers. Details about how to improve those chances have yet to be discovered - or rediscovered. But such details will likely revolve around the need to treat both sexes equally, to improve the dignity and respect of the court, and to recognize the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives. It seems counterproductive in both financial and emotional terms, for example, to be demonizing and jailing men for bringing children they cannot afford into the world while at the same time lionizing and subsidizing women for participating in the same. And it gives the Commission pause to wonder, given the ordinary advantages of father involvement, why mothers are still six times more likely than fathers to get custody of the children even as women participate in near equal numbers in the workplace. See **Appendix C** for the latest New Hampshire custody statistics.

For further information on the benefits of father involvement and, conversely, the disadvantages of father absence, see the 5th edition of *Father Facts*, available at <http://www.fatherhood.org>.

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Commissioner Colby attended A 2009 Northeast Family Strengthening Conference sponsored by the ACF and returned with a wealth of encouragement from information gleaned at a seminar, *“Empowering Families: Tools for Healthy Marriage, Responsible Fatherhood and Family Finances,”* and a brochure, *“Healthy Marriage & Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives.”*

In his keynote address, Tim Nelson described a study of low income fathers he conducted with his wife, Kathryn Edin (*Fatherhood in the Lives of Low Income Men*). They found that low income young men were pleased at becoming fathers despite overwhelming reasons not to be: poverty, crime, lack of education, etc. The majority of men in this study, corroborated by other studies, were that young men were happy about the prospects of becoming a father. That the “kids gave them something to live for” was a common theme. Concern was expressed about the general inflexibility of child support agencies and that they should give higher priority for encouraging co-parenting classes and improving dialogue between young moms and dads. He cited the harm done by denial of visitation both to the child and the father, and that fathering should ordinarily be encouraged - especially for fathers complying with their financial child support orders.

The workshops, *“Engaging Fathers in Child Welfare,”* *“Parenting as Partners,”* and *“Beyond Blame,”* were relevant to our mission and provided a deeper understanding of the tools and questions we need to develop as a society to make things better for children and families. Why, for example, do young men and women put parenthood before marriage - even at the risk of poverty; and why can’t dads who have no money get in-kind credit for child support? Shouldn’t there also be a niche for treating young couples in abusive relationships who both demonstrate a desire to resolve their differences in a constructive way?

Parenting Classes for Dads

Jeff Drake of the Monadnock Family Resource Center has started a parenting class for dads. For more information contact: jdrake@mfs.org or jeff@successfulparents.com. The CSM supports all efforts to increase the abilities and skills needed to be a successful parent and encourages men, especially fathers of young children, to be the best parent they can be.

All Pro Dad

In one effort to help fathers be more involved with their children, the CSM established a link on its website to <http://www.allprodad.com> where a variety of resources are available such as free monthly breakfasts and other attractive activities. All Pro Dad is sponsored by Family First, a nonprofit organization which provides resources on marriage, parenting, and fatherhood. All Pro Dad is a discussion and support group for fathers (children are welcome at the meetings). Groups

meet once per month to share parenting advice and connect with each other. There is also an email list with daily parenting tips. All Pro Dad is affiliated with a small number of NFL teams who open their stadiums for a three hour event where dads and their children can meet with professional football players and coaches. The CSM encourages New Hampshire fathers to be involved with All Pro Dad and to help organize monthly breakfasts.

More Resources for Fathers

At a time when parental roles are changing—more women in the workplace, more stay-at-home dads, more complex family situations where the courts have a role—a variety of new family services are offering programs specifically targeting fathers. Good Beginnings of Sullivan County, <http://sullivancounty.goodbeginnings.net> recognizes the importance of fathers. Daddy and Me, <http://www.rochesterymca.org/campcory/daddy-and-me.aspx> specializes in camping programs for Dads to get away with their son(s) and/or daughter(s) to spend quality time together. The HUB Family Resource Center, <http://www.hubfamilies.org> and Monadnock Family Services in Keene, <http://www.mfs.org> recently received grants for nurturing father support. According to Lisa Paone, director of the Dover HUB, dads are getting a new sense of importance and relevance for their children as the result of such programs.

Legislation

Many bills are being introduced by the legislature that may impact the status of men. Inclusion of a bill in this list does not imply support or opposition and is submitted for informational purposes only.

- Bills of Address **HA 1**, **HA 2**, and **HA 3** (2010) were introduced in an effort to redress alleged unlawful actions of certain judges and marital masters.
- **HB 2** (2009) Section 144:87 Terminates or reorganizes the Commission on the Status of Men in June, 2011. The CSM strongly encourages continuation of the CSM in its present form in order to better serve men's wellness and, by extension, the wellness of their children and families.
- **HB 139** (2009) - relative to the determination of parental rights and responsibilities. The commission supports this bill as it would require the court to submit a written justification for denial of shared parenting petitions.
- **HB 207** (2009) - relative to modification of parental rights and responsibilities. The commission supports this bill as it might encourage a better connection between fathers (and mothers) and their children.
- **HB 209** (2009) - relative to enforcement of parenting plans. The commission supports this bill as it would amend the period of time in which the court reviews motions for contempt of court ordered parenting time from 30 days to ten days.

- **HB 230** (2010) - Modifies the burden of proof in domestic violence allegations.
- **HB 1156** (2010) - Codifies the best interests of children
- **HB 1165** (2010) - Designed to enforce child support compliance by allowing the Division of Child Support Services access to internet service records.
- **HB 1178** (2010) - Establishes a committee to study children and families. Representation from the Commission on the Status of Women was provided for while representation from the Commission on the Status of Men was not. This commission will ask for an amendment that will recognize the equal importance of men in any study of children and families.
- **HB 1197** (2010) - Revises the child support formula in shared parenting cases.
- **HB 1215** (2010) - Improves gender references in certain public assistance statutes.
- **HB 1216** (2010) - Establishes the self-support reserve at 115 percent of the poverty level.
- **HB 1306** (2010) - Requires judges to read marital master decisions.
- **HB 1307** (2010) - Establishes hearings and terms for marital masters.
- **HB 1384** (2010) - Establishes a suicide review committee.
- **HB 1420** (2010) - Requires clarification of child support orders in certain cases.
- **HB 1424** (2010) - Provides for a performance audit of the Division of Child Support Services. The bill should be modified to include annual collections rates for all accounts along with annual changes in numbers of children served since 1986.
- **HB 1491** (2010) - Relative to child support and responsibility for extraordinary child-rearing expenses in cases of shared parenting.
- **HB 1510** (2010) - Permits no-fault divorce only when no children are involved.
- **HB 1552** (2010) - Requires application of the Melson Formula in the child support guidelines.

The commission was asked to discuss various marriage/civil union bills, but did not feel qualified. A minority held, however, that the commission should do whatever it can to facilitate the connection between children and both of their natural parents with an emphasis on the father given the fatherless rates these days.

Steps in the Juvenile Court Process and the Child Welfare System

Commissioner Colby, who is familiar with the child welfare system, believes it to be more complex and confusing than it needs to be. Accordingly, the CSM hopes to develop recommendations that might produce better outcomes for men and children going forward. See **Appendix E**

CONCLUSION SUMMARY AND GOALS

Based on some of the critical points in our initial overview for this report, issues including premature and preventable deaths of males, inferior school performance of males and difficulty of males being able to maintain meaningful contact with their children all suggest the need for the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men (CSM) to continue to move forward and serve as a model for our country to realize that ignoring such issues goes well beyond “doing the right thing” by males and appears to clearly link to issues of economic productivity in local, national and international spheres; creating informed and engaged male citizens in our communities most strikingly suggest possible threats to our national security to have less than physically and emotionally healthy as well as academically capable males in our workforce.

The most salient achievements of the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men during the biennium include, but are not limited to:

(1) Slow and steady progress in apparent elevated levels of interest, support and respect for the issues that are central to the mission of the CSM. Some examples include:

(a) Invitation of our Commission to have representation on the Legislative Taskforce on Work and Family and the White House Forum on Responsible Fatherhood.

(b) Acceptance of our Commission as contributors to the goals and missions of the New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network (NH CAN), the Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) and the Children’s Trust Fund.

(c) Recognition by the New Hampshire Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Abuse that men can be victims as well.

(2) An increase in the numbers of people appearing before our Commission to provide public testimony in response to our invitation to address specific concerns as well as those who are seeking our input, collaboration and support for issues of importance to them. The latter group includes researchers working at UNH to re-examine issues in child support enforcement and an attorney who travels nationally regarding issues of paternity fraud prevention and intervention.

(3) Improvements in efficacy and effectiveness in outcomes within both public and private sector agencies that have decision making capacity over the lives of males of all ages in our state. Our communications with the Attorney General’s office regarding concerns over enforcement practices of laws such as RSA 633:4 and our efforts to communicate with the NH Association of Police Chiefs and the NH Department of Health and Human Services are examples of this.

Goals for the NH Commission on the Status of Men during the next Biennial Period include, but are not limited to:

(1) Encourage the Governor and Council and all members of the New Hampshire legislature to fully realize the crucial importance of the economic, social and political viability of the continuation of the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men. We remain a national leader, being the only state in the country with such a Commission. Based on data from reliable sources, furthermore, the depth of the threat to our state and nation to ignore the current problems plaguing males of all ages must be viewed as more than just one issue on the table at a time. The domino effect is potentially crippling. What we have discovered about how the cycle of fatherlessness and its connection with the instability of children, poor academic performance, school dropouts, substance abuse and associated crime (some of which harms or kills others) indicates that New Hampshire will have the ranks of our welfare cases and incarcerated males grow at tax payer expense, and reduce the number of skilled taxpayers in our workforce.

(2) Increase the number of advocacy contacts made by our Commission with the goal of engaging crucial members of our governmental and private agencies into meaningful dialogue which will result in clear action plans to address and attempt to remediate identified problems impacting males of all ages in our state on a timeline that is agreeable to all parties.

(3) Increase the representation of the CSM on other appropriate legislative task forces and at local, regional and national events related to our mission and goals.

(4) Emphasize the importance of our aforementioned suggestions for child support and guardian *ad litem*s and to help policy makers, court authorities and other agencies develop clear action plans to facilitate improved wellness levels for all family members.

(5) Continue efforts to gather and disseminate data on males in areas related to our mission with the goal of improving healthcare, mental health, education, access by male parents to their children, etc.

APPENDIX A: White House Letter

April 27, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am writing to you on behalf of the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men. We applaud your administration's establishment of the White House Council on Women and Girls. It is our belief that the issues in our society that are unique to issues of biological sex and gender roles are worthy of special attention.

The intent of this letter is to respectfully request that your administration examine the issues that are particular to men and boys in our society including but not limited to those involving health and mental health care, educational attainment status and the father/child connection. Information regarding these types of issues can be found on our website which houses our biennial reports at www.nh.gov/csm. Your consideration of establishing a White House Council on Men and Boys is both urged and appreciated.

We are hopeful that the visions you have begun to move forward with that promise greater equity to all people than previously realized in our great nation will include issues of gender equity as well. To this end, our Commission is looking forward to your response regarding this important issue. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

[SIGNED]

Scott Meyer, MSW, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Cc: The Honorable John Lynch, Governor

APPENDIX B: NH Attorney General Correspondence; RSA 633:4

February 20, 2009

Kelly Ayotte
Attorney General's Office
33 Capitol Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear General Ayotte:

During the last meeting of the NH Commission on the Status of Men it was determined that your help would be of great value regarding comments we have received about RSA 633:4. Testimony both written and verbal before the Commission has claimed that RSA 633:4 (attached) is not being enforced consistently and is being used to keep fathers with visitation rights away from their children.

After discussion of the issue at the January 30, 2009 Commission meeting in Concord we are requesting that you provide clarification. Would you be as kind as to respond in writing and/or at an appearance before the Commission to advise us as to your understanding of the law, the intent, and the use of RSA 633:4 in regards to parental contact with children.

We look forward to hearing from you soon and working with you on this important concern. If you have questions, I can be reached at:

352-7512 X4160
352-8126
lcolby@scshelps.org

For the NH Commission on the Status of Men, I am,

[SIGNED]

Larry Colby

cc: Joseph Mastromarino, Chair NHCSM
Chief Ted Smith, NH Association of Chiefs of Police

(continued)

APPENDIX B (continued):

TITLE LXII CRIMINAL CODE

CHAPTER 633 INTERFERENCE WITH FREEDOM

Section 633:4

633:4 Interference With Custody. –

I. A person is guilty of a class B felony if such person knowingly takes from this state or entices away from this state any child under the age of 18, or causes any such child to be taken from this state or enticed away from this state, with the intent to detain or conceal such child from a parent, guardian or other person having lawful parental rights and responsibilities as described in RSA 461-A.

II. A person is guilty of a misdemeanor if such person knowingly takes, entices away, detains or conceals any child under the age of 18, or causes any such child to be taken, enticed away, detained or concealed, with the intent to detain or conceal such child from a parent, guardian or other person having lawful parental rights and responsibilities as described in RSA 461-A.

III. It shall be an affirmative defense to a charge under paragraph I or II that the person so charged was acting in good faith to protect the child from real and imminent physical danger. Evidence of good faith shall include but shall not be limited to the filing of a nonfrivolous petition documenting such danger and seeking to modify the custody decree in a court of competent jurisdiction within this state. Such petition must be filed within 72 hours of termination of visitation rights.

IV. The affirmative defense set forth in paragraph III shall not be available if the person charged with the offense has left this state with the child.

Source. 1983, 390:1. 1998, 292:2. 2005, 273:16, eff. Oct. 1, 2005.

APPENDIX B (continued):

**ATTORNEY GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

33 CAPITOL STREET
CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03301-6397

KELLY A. AYOTTE
ATTORNEY GENERAL



ORVILLE B. "BUD" FITCH II
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

March 27, 2009

Mr. Larry Colby
N.H. Commission on the Status of Men
c/o Joseph Mastromarino
P.O. Box 654
Hampton, New Hampshire 03843-0654

Dear Mr. Colby:

Attorney General Kelly Ayotte asked me to respond to your letter regarding the enforcement of RSA 633:4.

As I am sure you are aware, the enforcement of RSA 633:4 (and most criminal laws) are in the first instance, within the jurisdiction of the local law enforcement agency involved and the local district or superior court. Each case turns on its unique set of facts and circumstances. If the Commission becomes aware of specific instances where RSA 633:4 is not being followed or is being misused, this office would be interested to know the specifics of each such case. Please feel free to forward any case materials and court orders to my attention for review. Please make your submissions as complete and comprehensive as you can.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Brown
Senior Assistant Attorney General
Civil Bureau
(603) 271-3650

MKB/llm
cc: Kelly Ayotte

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APPENDIX C: Letter to the NH Department of Health and Human Services



State of New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men

Joseph H. Mastromarino, M.D., Chairperson
P.O. Box 654, Hampton, N.H. 03843-0654
Tel: 601-2268 E-Mail: EmergencyMD@aol.com

July 10, 2008

Commissioner Nicholas Toupas
NH DHHS Commissioners Office
129 Pleasant St
Concord, NH 03301-3857

Dear Commissioner Toupas:

I am writing in follow-up to our letters to you of June in which we requested data about the costs of fatherless families to the state of New Hampshire and a permanent liaison to the Commission on the Status of Men to address these and other issues. We continue to look for a response from you about the various issues raised. Since that correspondence, The National Fatherhood Initiative has fortuitously published an authoritative article entitled "The Costs of Father Absence" which provides both focus and a framework for you to get this data for us, in keeping with our legislative mandate. I have enclosed a copy of the report for your reference. This report categorizes the expenditures using fourteen major government programs (Figure 3 on Page 10). We ask that you provide the New Hampshire data for these same fourteen programs. Gathering and presenting the information using this outline will both substantially decrease the effort to assemble this data and will increase its relevance by comparison with national figures.

This enclosed report conservatively estimates that the national costs of father absence (for only the fourteen government programs addressed) at almost **\$100 Billion dollars**. A careful reading of this rather brief report and reviewing the federal data referenced as the basis of their conclusions makes it clear that the costs are almost certainly underestimated.

I am sure that you find this report to be enormously helpful, and elucidation of the New Hampshire data and subsequent legislative response to address the issues may have immense potential impact on the New Hampshire budget process. It is very possible that the savings from implementing only a few changes will yield savings to the state on the order of the yearly budget deficit.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph H. Mastromarino, MD, Chair
NH Commission on the Status of Men

cc: Hon. Gov. John Lynch,
Members of Executive Council
with enclosure

APPENDIX D: NH Child Custody Statistics

NH DIVORCE AWARD OF CUSTODY OF MINOR CHILDREN ALL PHYSICAL CUSTODY CASES 2006 - 2008 NH Div. of Vital Records Administration 9/3/2009

Total Number of 2006 Divorces in NH = 5374

Physical Custody 2006	cases	% cases	children	% children
Mother Only	1621	64.38%	2783	64.35%
Father only	214	8.50%	367	8.49%
Joint	652	25.89%	1103	25.50%
Welfare	1	0.04%	1	0.02%
Split Mother & Father	30		1.19%	
Mother	38		0.88%	
Father	33		0.76%	
Split Mother & Welfare	0		0.00%	
Split Father & Welfare	0		0.00%	
TOTAL	2518	100.00%	4325	100.00%

Total Number of 2007 Divorces in NH = 5041

Physical Custody 2007	cases	% cases	children	% children
Mother Only	1494	61.99%	2545	61.79%
Father only	233	9.67%	395	9.59%
Joint	649	26.93%	1097	26.63%
Welfare	2	0.08%	4	0.10%
Split Mother & Father	30		1.24%	
Mother	36		0.87%	
Father	34		0.83%	
Split Mother & Welfare	1		0.04%	
Mother	1		0.02%	
Welfare	1		0.02%	
Split Father & Welfare	1		0.04%	
Father	2		0.05%	
Welfare	4		0.10%	
TOTAL	2410	100.00%	4119	100.00%

Total Number of 2008 Divorces in NH = 5082

Physical Custody 2008	cases	% cases	children	% children
Mother Only	1463	60.40%	2509	60.12%
Father only	208	8.59%	340	8.15%
Joint	724	29.89%	1260	30.19%
Welfare	1	0.04%	2	0.05%
Split Mother & Father	26		1.07%	
Mother	31		0.74%	
Father	31		0.74%	
Split Mother & Welfare	0		0.00%	
Split Father & Welfare	0		0.00%	
TOTAL	2422	100.00%	4173	100.00%

Steps in the Child Welfare System

When children go into placement and the plan is for the children to go home with their family (Reunification)

